

preached throughout New England. He is a published author, too, and a successful small business owner. He has also had experience that all of us can relate to. In a previous community, he served as a town selectman, so he has a keen understanding of the challenges of public service, as his opening prayer demonstrated today.

It is a great pleasure to have such a dedicated spiritual and civic leader with us today and giving the opening prayer. I am sure I speak for all of my colleagues in extending him a warm welcome and in giving thanks for his inspiring prayer.

Thank you, Mr. President.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 10 a.m., with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I just got word that the 2,500th soldier was killed in Iraq. It is a milestone, obviously, that we all mourn deeply in this country. And that is what I rise to talk about, as a few of those who have died in the line of duty were from my State.

Mr. President, May was an especially difficult month for our home State of Nevada. We mourn the loss of four soldiers and marines who were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. One soldier was killed during training. And just last week, another soldier from Winnemucca, NV, was killed. While there is incomparable grief following these deaths, there is also strength and pride that never ceases to amaze me.

I had the opportunity to attend two of the recent funerals: the funeral of ISG Carlos Saenz at Arlington National Cemetery and the funeral of SGT John Griffith at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City. Each funeral I have attended and each family who grieves finds a very special place in my heart, and they will always stay with me.

ISG Sergeant Carlos Saenz was born in Mexico. He became a naturalized citizen and considered himself extremely lucky and proud to have been an American, as we all should. And for more than 25 years, he dedicated himself to serving this country. His wife Nanette is a woman of great strength who understood her husband's determination and commitment to our country. They actually met during the first Persian Gulf war. She is proud of him, and we are all blessed that he came to the United States and was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for his new Nation.

SGT John Griffith lived in Las Vegas most of his life. He told his wife Christa that he was fighting this war so their son would not have to. I will never forget the image of his two young daughters, just as the funeral had ended and they were taking the coffin out. As they were putting it into the hearse, I heard his two young daughters crying, and I heard one of them say: Don't let them take daddy.

That is the real pain of war coming home to a family, and we should all remember the sacrifices that not only the men and women in uniform who have died have made but also the sacrifices and the pain their families go through.

I also had the opportunity to speak with Victoria Legaspi, the mother of SSG Emmanuel Legaspi. Manny was born in the Philippines and signed up in the Army at the age of 32, after living in the United States for only 1 year. He wanted to give back to this country, and he wanted to show his appreciation. Manny should make all of us a little more proud to be Americans.

We live in the greatest country in the world—where brave Americans such as Carlos, John, and Manny, and so many others believe so deeply in our freedom that they are willing to sacrifice their lives so that we can all live safe and free. These men follow a distinguished line of courageous men and women who have paid that ultimate price for this Nation.

They are not the only ones who have made this sacrifice. As I mentioned before, the families, and one woman in particular, Helena Lukac, have touched my heart. Helena Lukac moved to the United States in 1983 from the former Communist Czechoslovakia. Her son John was killed by a roadside bomb attack in Iraq. He was just 19 years old. Helena knows what it means to be free better than most of us. On Memorial Day, just a few weeks ago, Helena said:

I'm really grateful that we are here, even with this loss. I miss him so much, I feel it on my own skin. This freedom is not free.

Mr. President, freedom is not free. The brave men and women in our military and their families sacrifice greatly for us, and we can never thank them enough, but we can express our gratitude to them.

So today I again say thank you to the men and women who stand tall in defense of this Nation and in support of our freedom. You make us proud. And with a very heavy heart, I thank the families across America and across my State whose pain I cannot even begin to imagine. Your loss is our Nation's loss. God bless you all, and God bless this country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senate is going to be considering in just a few minutes the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act. I do want to be clear that like most of my colleagues, I will be voting for this bill because it does provide the funding for our troops that is critically needed to carry out their mission and because it supports recovery efforts along the coast. I do wish to express three concerns I have with the conference report.

First, this bill continues the charade that this war should be funded off budget. Instead of including the money our troops need in the regular budget as requested by the President and sent to us, we keep getting sent emergency supplemental requests. It is clear to me, having been here for 13½ years, that emergency spending bills used to be for emergencies, things we could not foresee such as natural disasters. The need for funding for the war in Iraq is not a surprise. It is not like responding to an earthquake or tornado. By funding the war off budget, I fear we continue to hide the true cost of the war. It is imperative that the Senate and the House get a budget from the President that gives us the true cost of what we need to be funding.

In addition, the administration should not have the sole authority to decide what is worthy of emergency funding and what is not. We have emergencies in our backyard as well as overseas. We should not hand over to the President the final authority on what deserves emergency funding.

The second concern I have is that this bill leaves out very critical funding for areas we considered and adopted in the Senate. They were removed once the bill went to conference. Funding for health care, for port security, emergency transportation assistance in the gulf coast—much of the progress we made in the Senate was thrown out. Why? To meet an arbitrary limit set by the President. That is going to hurt many of our communities in the coming months.

Part of what we did in the Senate in April was to overwhelmingly pass the Murray-Akaka amendment that ensured our veterans would get the help they need. That amendment had broad bipartisan support on the Senate floor. It was removed in conference in the middle of the night. That is a huge setback for the men and women who are coming home from the war today and entering a VA system that is overwhelmed and underfunded. In March, the VA told us they are seeing 38 percent more Iraqi war veterans than they budgeted for. Veterans now have to wait a year to get the specialty care they deserve. Some are waiting more than 18 months before they get the benefits they have been promised. On top of that, we have waiting lists that are thousands of names long at major VA hospitals. I am frustrated that the